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ABSTRACT

Cognitive and behavioral objectives of a K-12 political education program are outlined. Four major categories of competencies are presented: (1) understanding the essential roles of government in any society; (2) knowledge of the structure and functioning of the American government at the national, state, and local levels; (3) understanding the political process and civic participation; and (4) commitment to human rights. Within each category, competencies are suggested for primary level, intermediate level, and secondary level. Examples of primary level competencies are that students will be able to list rules observed in their families, schools, and peer groups; recognize that all governments maintain peace and order and provide services; and demonstrate willingness to cooperate and share responsibility when working in a group. Examples of intermediate level competencies are that students will be able to demonstrate the ability to locate a variety of sources of information relating to a given political issue, list qualifications for American citizenship and the ways by which aliens may become citizens, and list some positive ways in which government affects students' lives. Examples of secondary level competencies include that students will be able to identify local governmental agencies and officials and explain their functions, and analyze the conflict between national sovereignty and universal human rights. (DB)

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Political Education Competencies K-12

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SOCIAL STUDIES STAFF
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I. STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO DEMONSTRATE AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE ESSENTIAL ROLES OF GOVERNMENT IN ANY SOCIETY.

A. Primary Level

1. Show, by examples, why all groups need to have rules.

2. List rules observed in their families, schools and peer groups.

3. Identify rules which are made by the community and which affect students and explain what happens if these rules are not followed.

4. Develop an awareness that small groups can function with fewer rules and control than large groups.

5. Recognize that all governments maintain peace and order and provide services.

B. Intermediate Level

1. List some of the positive ways in which government affects students' lives.

2. Identify services provided by a community, state and nation.

3. Explain how and why it is desirable to limit the power of government.

4. Analyze and compare the role of government in hunting, agricultural and technological societies.

5. Show an awareness of the historical development of different types of government and give reasons for each.

6. Be able to define the following types of government and locate a current example of each: dictatorship, limited monarchy, absolute monarchy, federal government, confederation, parliamentary government.

C. Secondary Level

1. Show an understanding of the social contract theory and explain its importance in the development of American government.

2. Identify the political and economic differences between capitalism, socialism, communism and fascism.

3. Identify the methods by which governments may arrange for the transfer of power and show the inherent weakness of a government which does not have any such arrangement.

4. Identify the types of economic, social and cultural services provided by governments (local, state, national, international).

5. Analyze the methods used by governments to resolve conflicts.

6. Demonstrate an understanding of the role of international and regional governmental organizations, i.e., United Nations, Organization of American States, European Economic Community and others.

7. Explain how government allocates and controls use of natural resources.

II. STUDENTS WILL DEMONSTRATE A KNOWLEDGE OF THE STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONING OF THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT AT THE NATIONAL, STATE AND LOCAL LEVELS.

A. Primary Level

1. Differentiate between formal and informal group organization.

2. Recognize that in a democracy, leaders are chosen by their groups.

3. Show an awareness of the ways in which leadership brings power and responsibility.

4. Explain the importance of having leaders with different ideas.

5. Recognize the differing powers and responsibilities of students, teachers and principals.

6. Be able to name the major political parties.

7. Know that the Pennsylvania state government, like the national government, is based on a constitution and is composed of three branches of government.

8. Recognize that the courts provide just ways of resolving disputes.

B. Intermediate Level

1. Differentiate among township, borough, city and county government.

2. Identify the following officials and their major roles:

a. U. S. President and Vice-President.

b. Pennsylvania Governor and Lieutenant Governor.

c. Pennsylvania Senators and district representatives in the U. S. Congress.

d. local representative(s) in the Pennsylvania legislature.

e. major local government official(s).

f. school officials, including school board members.

3. Demonstrate an understanding that state and national governments each have specific powers respected by the other.

4. Demonstrate an understanding of the differences between the Republican and Democratic parties and identify several major leaders in each party.

5. Explain the meaning of "due process" and "right to dissent". as provided by the Constitution.

C. Secondary Level

1. Given a list of governmental powers, students will identify levels of jurisdiction: local, state, national.

2. Illustrate the process of constitutional amendment, using as an example a recent amendment (Voting Age or Equal Rights Amendments).

3. Show a knowledge of the areas in which national and state governments work together. Explain "grants-in-aid" and "revenue sharing."

4. Show the ability to categorize amendments to the Constitution under the following:

a. extended participation in government

b. solving problems

c. changing governmental structures and/or functioning

d. extension of civil rights

5. Demonstrate an understanding of the structure and operation of political parties and evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of party politics.

6. Show the ability to analyze the impeachment process.

7. Differentiate between elected and appointed governmental officials and explain the reason for the respective selection processes.

8. Explain the importance of the committee system in legislative bodies and evaluate the seniority system.

9. Identify local governmental agencies and officials and the type of assistance each can provide.

10. Demonstrate an understanding of judicial interpretation and its effect on the Constitution.

11. Show an awareness that constitutional guarantees depend on limitation of governmental powers.

12. Cite specific examples of the ways in which each branch of the government checks, and is checked by others, and show how this has been modified through history.

13. Determine how government policy is formulated (i.e. the role of the cabinet, bureaucracy, customs and tradition and other factors).

III. STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO DEMONSTRATE AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE POLITICAL PROCESS AND CIVIC PARTICIPATION

A. Primary

1. Demonstrate a willingness to cooperate and share responsibility when working with a group.

2. Develop an understanding of the importance of leadership and responsibility within a group.

3. Give an example of decision-making in a family or school situation.

4. Show respect for school rules and public property.

5. Determine a course of action which might be taken to protest or change an unfair rule.

6. Demonstrate a willingness to listen to and respect others' points of view.

7. Indicate the ability to obtain different opinions about a controversial issue.

8. Show an understanding of the importance of voting by secret ballot.

9. Understand the process of compromise.

B. Intermediate

1. Given a political issue, demonstrate the ability to locate a variety of sources of information.

2. Develop an awareness that individuals have a responsibility to affect political decision-making on domestic and foreign policy by voting, writing letters to legislators and joining interest groups.

3. Evaluate the effect of parents/guardians and peer groups on one's own views of specific political issues.

4. Draw inferences from simple political cartoons.

5. Identify opposing interest groups on the local, national and international levels.

6. Demonstrate the ability to organize and/or lead a group activity.

7. Identify several current political issues in Pennsylvania.

C. Secondary

1. Describe and illustrate ways in which individuals and groups can affect political decisions at all levels of government.

2. Demonstrate the ability to analyze,and draw inferences from charts, graphs, tables of statistical information.

3. Select a political problem issue and design strategies for an effective solution.

4. Demonstrate the ability to evaluate political information in press, television and other media.

5. Given a list of political decisions, identify the official or agency responsible for each.

6. Demonstrate the ability to organize and analyze such political information as voting records, budgets, campaign platforms, etc.

7. Explain and evaluate the procedures and strategies of a political campaign.

8. Show an understanding of registration and voting procedures.

9. Illustrate the various factors which influence an individual's political attitudes, including age, race, sex, religion ethnic background, socio-economic status and peer group influence.

10. Show a willingness to examine their own political attitudes and be able to substantiate personal opinions.

11. Demonstrate a knowledge of various methods used to resolve political conflicts, i. e., consensus, compromise, arbitration, mediation.

12. Demonstrate the ability to contact or influence local government leaders and officials.

IV. STUDENTS WILL DEMONSTRATE A COMMITMENT TO HUMAN RIGHTS AND LIBERTIES.

A. Primary

1. Show an understanding of the ways in which school rules protect individual rights.

2. Demonstrate a knowledge of the various kinds of differences which exist in their school and community.

3. Show an understanding that a good citizen is one who exercises his/her freedom with consideration for another's rights.

4. Demonstrate an awareness that with every right there is a responsibility.

5. Explain why rights are important to protect minorities, limit power, etc.

6. Recognize basic concepts of our system of government (liberty, justice and equality).

B. Intermediate

1. Demonstrate an understanding that the government guarantees freedom of speech, press, religion and other rights.

2. Show an acceptance of the need in a democracy for tolerance of conflicting ideas and beliefs.

3. Identify the freedoms guaranteed U. S. citizens and locate their sources.

4. Recognize the civil rights and liberties which have been denied ethnic and racial minority groups and women.

5. Demonstrate a knowledge of the historical extension of the franchise to various groups in American society.

6. Develop an awareness of the major racial, ethnic and feminist movements of the 20th century.

7. Show an understanding of the ways in which minority groups have influenced civil rights and liberties.

8. List the qualifications for citizenship and the ways by which aliens may become citizens.

C. Secondary

1. Evaluate the laws by which the U. S. has regulated immigration in the 20th century.

2. Show an understanding of the delicate balance which exists between individual liberty and governmental authority.

3. Demonstrate an understanding of specific groups, leaders, tactics and successes of the Civil Rights movement and other minorities in extending opportunities through the political process.

4. Trace the development of the Women's Liberation Movement in the 1960's and 1970's.

5. Demonstrate an awareness of the patterns of prejudice and discrimination in American history.

6. Show an understanding of the ways in which international cooperation has improved the quality of life for people throughout the world.

7. Compare the Declaration of Human Rights with the United States Bill of Rights.

8. Analyze the conflict existing between national sovereignty and universal human rights.